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Legion

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By John Raughter

SEASON OF GIVING

American Legion Sons William, 5, and Michael King, 7, play games before Operation North Pole at Fort Riley, Kan., on Dec. 7, 2018. During the annual event, the Kansas Legion Family delivers hundreds of toys to children whose parents are deployed or in the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Riley. *Photo by Katie Currid*

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American Legion commemorative coins – silver dollar, clad half dollar and gold – are available for purchase from the U.S. Mint only through Dec. 31. Proceeds help support American Legion programs. Buy yours today at legion.org/coin. *Photo by Ben Mikesell*



The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its nearly 2 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 12,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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'In Defense of Foreign Aid'

Alan W. Dowd's article (October) – and the cover – mentions the Berlin Airlift. I served with the 529th Military Police Service Company. The convoy started in Giessen, West Germany, led by the 529th. I was one of the MPs in the lead jeep. The convoy would start on Tuesday morning and go to Kassel, West Germany. The next day the Kassel MPs would take it through the British Zone to the Russian Zone. The next day the Berlin MPs would escort the convoy through the Russian Zone to Berlin. After a day, the empty convoy would return through the British Zone and Kassel, and on the following Monday it would return to Giessen. On Tuesday we would take another convoy out to Kassel.

– Bernard S. Shinko, Kingston, Pa.

Being a Berlin veteran, serving inside the Wall in 1968 and 1969, I want to thank you for the cover highlighting the airlift.

– Charles Farrell, Pinellas Park, Fla.

Alan W. Dowd has done it again. This article is excellent and well-researched; it's a keeper. I like the quote from Gen. James Mattis, and Dowd's final statement about Cold War 2.0 is worth remembering.

– Paul Shogren, Oakland, Md.

Alan W. Dowd provides a very good example of America's hidden aid in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak. However, besides the Department of Defense, there was another uniformed service involved in the effort.

U.S. troops deployed to Liberia that year did a fine job erecting

a 25-bed hospital in the capital of Monrovia, but it was U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps officers who staffed the hospital and treated Ebola patients. PHS officers were the only American uniformed personnel providing direct care for the patients. (I am retired from the PHS.)

In addition, officers assigned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) deployed to several West African countries, where they conducted disease tracking and worked with local authorities to effect hard cultural and behavioral changes that mitigated the spread of Ebola. For these outstanding efforts, President Obama presented the corps with the Presidential Unit Citation in 2015.

– Robert C. Williams, Schertz, Texas

While Alan W. Dowd correctly notes that foreign aid is critical to promoting our interests, he focuses on humanitarian and charity aspects. Charity is and should be a private function. Our foreign aid is and should be focused on our vital national interests, such as supporting necessary international norms and constructs.

— Joseph Gherlone, Fredericksburg, Va.

‘Opportunity to Succeed’

The article by Jeff Stoffer (October) doesn’t mention early efforts by The American Legion to provide post-World War I businesses and organizations with a way to differentiate between sincere down-on-their-luck veterans needing a leg up in life versus insincere nonveteran fakers trying to take advantage of good-hearted businesses and organizations. This problem was highlighted in *American Legion Weekly* magazines in the immediate postwar era.

One post, which I believe was in Providence, R.I., came up with an ingenious pre-DD-214 method by which veterans desiring a handout in either goods or services first had to obtain hard-copy proof of their service from one of the city’s many local American Legion posts.

— Gregory Casady, historian,
Rainbow Post 2, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Iran war powers amendment

Sen. Tim Cotton, R-Ark., is exactly right (Big Issues, October). Our president shouldn’t have to have Congress’ approval when our military has been attacked.

Sen. Tim Kaine knows full well the Democrats will bicker and stall while our troops are in harm’s way. Politics as usual.

— James N. Brooks, Heathsville, Va.

The first Thanksgiving

I was pleased to see in Lyn Mettler’s article (Travel, October) a listing for the celebration of the first English Thanksgiving in the New World at Charles City, Va. Bravo. Those of us in Virginia get weary of hearing about “the first Thanksgiving in Plymouth, Mass.”

— J.A. Barton Campbell, Richmond, Va.

SS American Legion

The page on SS *American Legion* (Lore of the Legion, November) missed its greatest contribution to the Navy during World War II. In August 1940, the ship arrived in the Finnish port of Petsamo – now Russian Pechengsky – to evacuate Norwegians and others. In secret, a 40mm Bofors twin mount anti-aircraft gun with spare parts, 3,000 ammunition rounds and complete drawings was driven up the length of Sweden and loaded on the ship.

I uncovered this while taking an oral history class at Cal State, Fullerton; one of my classmates interviewed someone evacuated on that voyage.

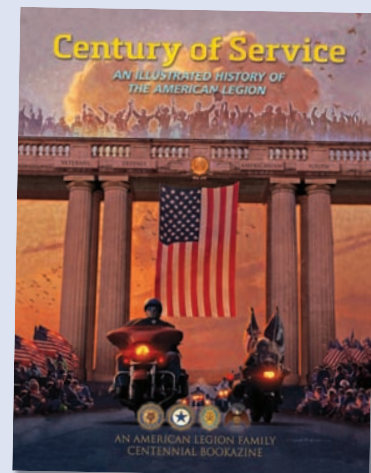
— Richard E. Hartman, Fullerton, Calif.

Editor’s note: National Chaplain Edward L. Harris Jr. is a member of Post 711 in Indianapolis, the 11th District’s headquarters post (2019-2020 National Officers, November).

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS

Include your hometown and a daytime phone number for verification. All letters published are subject to editing. Due to the volume of mail received, not every letter can be acknowledged.

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A mission to save lives

The holiday season, for most, is a time of joy and family togetherness. For some, including a significant number of veterans, it's also a time of serious risk, especially if they are alone or believe they are.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie told Legionnaires at the 101st National Convention in August that suicide prevention among veterans is the department's No. 1 clinical priority. The problem for VA is finding those who need help, who may be isolated, and connecting them with services and support people. Of the 20 veterans and military personnel lost daily to suicide, only six are enrolled in the VA health-care system.

A 2019 American Legion mental-health survey of more than 13,000 veterans and their families confirmed the need for VA's call to action. Over 30 percent of respondents said they knew a veteran who had died by suicide. About four in 10 veterans were unsure if they were even eligible for VA mental health-care services. Clearly, we have work to do.

"No VA secretary, no federal department, can solve this problem from Washington, especially when most of those veterans we need to reach are not in our system," Wilkie said. "We will not get anywhere on veteran suicide until this nation has a national conversation ... and that is a conversation that veterans can start today."

I would take his suggestion a step further. It has to be more than a conversation. It needs to be our mission. American Legion department chaplains gathered Sept. 21 for a conference in Indianapolis, where a VA suicide-prevention case manager explained that clergy and religious leaders "may be the first person (veterans) turn to for comfort, guidance and help" when facing mental health issues. The mission, we know, is not the responsibility of Legion chaplains alone. It belongs to all of us.

Among the many reasons for American Legion posts to conduct regular Buddy Checks, suicide prevention stands apart in what is described as a national crisis, one quantified by a 22-percent-higher suicide rate among veterans compared to the average adult U.S. population. The Buddy Check program, launched last March, has inspired posts to reach out to members and former members to simply see how they're doing. How can the Legion help them when they are struggling with life's difficulties? Their answer is how we execute our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

We are not asking Legionnaires to serve as mental health counselors. We are asking them to help steer veterans and their families to professionals who can help. VA counselors at the chaplain conference suggested the Legion become familiar with the S.A.V.E. process: signs, ask, validate and encourage. A training video at psycharmor.org/courses/s-a-v-e provides guidance on how to identify signs of suicidality, determine if a veteran is at risk and encourage them to get help.

If the need for help is immediate, the VA Suicide Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year at **1-800-273-8255**. Press **1** for veterans, text to **838255**, or chat online at **veteranscrisisline.net** to receive confidential intervention and support.

Nothing is more essential to the existence of The American Legion than direct, personal contact with our fellow veterans – members or not – and helping them understand that they are not alone.

James W. "Bill" Oxford



National Commander
James W. "Bill" Oxford

MEMORANDA

HOLIDAY DONOR BLOOD DRIVE

The American Legion's Holiday Donor Blood Drive runs from Nov. 28 to Dec. 31. According to the 2018-2019 Consolidated Post Report, 44,046 American Legion donors gave 69,053 pints of blood during the past membership year.

legion.org/security/blood

HOW TO DO A BUDDY CHECK


Buddy Checks can be done at any time by American Legion posts – not just twice a year – through personal visits, phone calls, email or text message, or a combination. National Headquarters offers guidance on how to conduct Buddy Checks. The downloadable toolkit includes tips, scripts, and answers to frequently asked questions about the Legion.

legion.org/membership/buddycheck

CENTENNIAL WEBSITE

Although the 15-month American Legion Centennial Celebration window officially closed on Veterans Day, the website for posts and departments to compile and share their history is permanent, and available for additional material, editing and viewing.

legion.org/centennial



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STILL SERVING AMERICA

YOUR AMERICAN LEGION AT WORK

“We believe clergy and religious leaders are an important link to helping their congregants get the mental health care they need. We believe you may be the first person (veterans) turn to for comfort, guidance and help when they are facing mental health issues.”

VA suicide prevention case manager Christa Sutton, speaking to American Legion department chaplains gathered Sept. 21 for the Combined Americanism Conference in Indianapolis



DoD

\$811,282

Amount in 2020 grants distributed by American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, to 19 nonprofits



Photo by Ben Mikesell

439

VA decision appeals cases handled and won by American Legion Board of Veterans Appeals representatives in September

\$16 million

Approximate total of grants distributed since CWF's founding in 1955

25,594

Minimum number of troop-support American Legion volunteers who participated in programs and efforts nationwide in the 2018-2019 membership year

\$13,000

Amount in American Legion National Emergency Fund grants distributed in September after floods in Kansas, North Carolina and Missouri



Photo by Julia Rendleman

3,167

American Legion posts that reported conducting a 100th-anniversary celebration event in the 2018-2019 membership year



Photo by Lucas Carter

63,815

New Legionnaires recruited by local posts in the 2018-2019 membership year

20,248

New Legionnaires recruited through Oct. 1, with nine months to go in the 2019-2020 membership year

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“Being a veterans service officer is the most rewarding job in the Legion, because there is a direct correlation to helping veterans.”



COURTNEY VANZANTEN

When Courtney VanZanten left the Air Force in 2010, she saw VA as a resource used primarily by older veterans or amputees, not younger veterans like herself.

“It wasn’t until getting actively involved in the Legion that I started to understand how a lot of veterans struggle with the red tape, the bureaucracy,” says VanZanten, who is the department service officer for South Dakota as well as Lake County.

She assists veterans in enrolling in VA, applying for VA home loans, filing claims and more. “Every day somebody sits across from my desk and I get to help them navigate systems, fill out paperwork, answer their questions. It’s the most rewarding job I’ve ever had. It’s phenomenal work.”

One of VanZanten’s best days was when she learned a veteran had finally been granted a claim for military sexual trauma, decades after it was denied.

“I got her to open up, to give a statement that would provide VA enough evidence to grant her claim,” VanZanten says. “She came into my office with the letter, crying. You get one claim like that and you’re hooked on this work for life.”

— Henry Howard

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- Department assistant adjutant (2019-present)
- National American Legion College graduate (2015)
- National Committee on Children and Youth member (2017-2018)
- National Employment & Veterans Preference Committee member (2018-2019)

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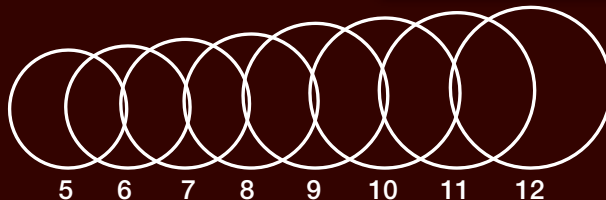
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Raise the federal minimum wage



SUPPORT

Rep. Andy Levin, D-Mich.

■ Levin is a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor.

The idea behind the federal minimum wage is simple: hardworking Americans should be paid at least enough to provide for themselves and their families.

After more than a decade with no increase in the national minimum wage – the longest stretch since it was established in 1938, under the Fair Labor Standards Act – it is no longer serving that purpose.

The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is a poverty wage in every region of the United States, from coastal cities to rural towns. In West Virginia, which has the least expensive housing costs in the nation, a minimum-wage worker would have to work 58 hours a week to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment.

House Democrats ran on the promise to raise wages for U.S. workers and build an economy that works for everyone. We helped fulfill that promise last summer by passing the Raise the Wage Act, a proposal that restores the value of work by gradually increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025.

Economists used to think these benefits come at too high a cost. A new wave of evidence is proving otherwise. Recent research from both left- and right-leaning labor economists shows that few, if any, jobs are lost by gradually raising the minimum wage over time.

Raising the minimum wage is good for workers, good for the economy and widely supported by the American people. Polls show that an increase is popular across demographic groups and the political spectrum. After a decade with the federal minimum wage stuck at \$7.25 an hour, the only thing radical about the Raise the Wage Act is that it is so long overdue.



OPPOSE

Rep. Mike Johnson, R-La.

■ Johnson is a member of the House Judiciary Committee.

As conservatives, we want each and every American to have the opportunity to be successful. Raising the minimum wage does the exact opposite and actually increases barriers to achieving the American dream. While a proposal

like this sounds nice, in reality it will result in massive job losses and a decrease in hours for employees who rely on that time to provide for their families.

In July, House Democrats passed a measure to mandate a 107 percent increase in the federal minimum wage. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a report noting that if this bill were to become law, up to 3.7 million Americans would likely lose their jobs in the next six years. Those most at risk of losing their jobs are low-skill, low-income employees already living paycheck to paycheck. While large corporations will be able to absorb the additional costs created by such an expansive increase in the minimum wage, small businesses may be forced to close their doors.

Conservatives support pro-growth policies that provide opportunities for hardworking Americans and their employers. We know that if businesses are growing, they provide more pay to their employees and create more jobs. In fact, only 2.3 percent of hourly workers are currently paid at or below the current minimum wage – half of which are below the age of 25, at the start of their careers or in part-time positions.

If we continue to cut excessive government regulation and unleash the free market, incomes will rise and economic mobility will increase. I am committed to championing these principles in Congress.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters say the Raise the Wage Act will improve the standard of living for U.S. workers and lift more than a million families out of poverty. Opponents say it will place a burden on employers, resulting in slower growth and layoffs.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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'TIS THE FLU SEASON

Media Bakery

Veterans should take advantage of no-cost flu shots.

BY MARK L. FUERST

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat and sometimes the lungs. The flu typically causes mild to severe illness, but at times it can be deadly.

The flu is different from a cold. It usually comes on suddenly. If you ever have had the flu, you know the symptoms all too well: fever/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, and possibly vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children).

Flu season runs from October to May, with most cases happening from late December to early March. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination, and protect you against viral infections. Traditional flu vaccines ("trivalent" vaccines) protect against three flu viruses: influenza A (H1N1) virus, influenza A (H3N2) virus and an influenza B virus. "Quadrivalent" vaccines protect against these same three viruses plus an additional B virus.

You need a flu shot every year because your body's immune response from vaccination declines

over time, and because flu viruses are constantly changing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviews flu vaccine formulations each year and updates them as needed to keep up with changing viruses.

"Randomized controlled trials and studies under real-world conditions show flu vaccines protect you against getting the flu and from being as severely ill, particularly if you have a respiratory or cardiac condition," says Ellyn Russo, director of the clinical epidemiology program at the White River Junction, Vt., VA Medical Center. "Our research demonstrates that flu vaccines lead to a clinically meaningful reduction in hospital rates and cost savings to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) system and society as a whole."

Russo encourages veterans to be vaccinated annually for influenza. "Get a flu shot," she says. "It's an important health-care measure."

Veterans have two options through VA for getting no-cost flu shots. As in previous years, free flu shots are available at all VA medical centers

See **FLU** on page 18

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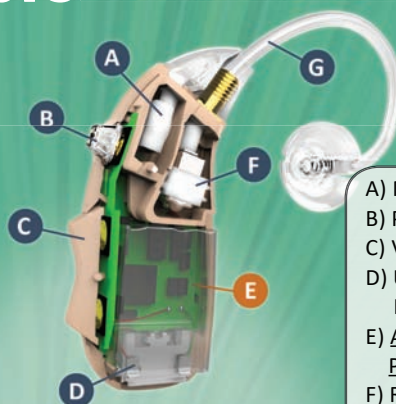


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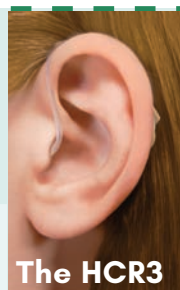
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Media Bakery

Healthy holiday eating

With the holiday season upon us, WebMD offers some helpful ways to stay healthy around the buffet table.

- **Start with breakfast.** Rather than save up calories for the big meal, eat a small meal in the morning to give you better control over your appetite. Start your day with a small but satisfying breakfast – say, an egg with a slice of whole-wheat toast, or a bowl of whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk – so you won't be starving by dinnertime. This "takes the edge off your appetite and allows you to be more discriminating in your food and beverage choices," says Connie Diekman, former president of the American Dietetic Association.

- **Try substitutes.** Whether you are hosting dinner or bringing dishes to share, aim for reduced fat, sugar and calories. Diekman suggests using fat-free chicken broth for gravy, using sugar substitutes or fruit in baked goods, reducing oil and butter, and substituting yogurt or fat-free sour cream for dips and mashed potatoes.

- **Watch your portions.** Before filling your plate, "survey the buffet table and decide what you're going to choose. Then select reasonable-sized portions of foods you cannot live without." Go with small portions of holiday favorites that come around only once a year.

- **Savor.** "Eating slowly, putting your fork down between bites, and tasting each mouthful is one of the easiest ways to enjoy your meal and feel satisfied with one plate full of food."

- **Go easy on alcohol.** Adult beverages are loaded with calories, and those liquid calories add up quickly.

- **Be realistic.** With busy schedules and so many extra temptations during the holidays, strive for weight maintenance instead of weight loss.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

FLU *continued from page 16*

and community-based outpatient clinics. Veterans enrolled in the VA health-care system can also receive no-cost vaccinations through a partnership with the 9,600 Walgreens pharmacies nationwide. Just present your Veterans Health Identification Card and one other form of photo ID to receive a vaccination.

When a Walgreens pharmacist administers the shot, the immunization information is transmitted to VA through the eHealth Exchange. It becomes part of your health record and automatically becomes available for VA clinicians to review within 24 hours. This program runs through March 31, 2020.

For the 2019-2020 flu season, the no-cost option is for the quadrivalent version of the vaccine only. There will be no high-dose option this year at VA medical facilities or Walgreens. High-dose vaccines contain an adjuvant that boosts immune response and are specifically designed for people 65 and older. Medicare does cover the high-dose vaccine, which can be provided by pharmacies or other health-care providers.

VA recommends that everyone six months and older receive a flu shot to reduce the risk of getting sick. Those more at risk of illness and complications from the flu include people 65 and older; those with health problems, such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease and other chronic illnesses or conditions; pregnant women; caregivers of infants or family members with health problems; and health-care personnel.

There are two other good reasons to get the flu shot, however. You are protecting yourself as well others because the vaccine can reduce the risk of transmitting the flu to family members and visitors. Also, it can lessen your flu symptoms and help you get over the flu a few days faster than someone who has not been vaccinated.

Mark L. Fuerst is a Brooklyn-based health and fitness writer.

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‘WE CAN DO IT’

Developers intend to turn the West Los Angeles VA campus into a haven for homeless veterans, but history and funding problems suggest a difficult challenge.

**BY KEN OLSEN
PHOTOS BY SCHELLY STONE**

Homeless veterans pitch tents outside the gates of the West Los Angeles VA campus. About one in five of the nation's homeless veterans live in Los Angeles County.

When a team from Volunteers of America found Melissa Degnan living on the streets of Orange County in February 2016, she was cleaning the bathroom at an RV storage yard in exchange for a place to sleep. She'd had a close call with a roving band of teens who were beating up homeless people.

"Things were getting pretty hairy at the place I was hiding out," Degnan says. "They had their sights on me."

Outreach volunteers persuaded Degnan to get into their car by offering her a burrito – "it was my first hot food in years," she says – and took her to a former Navy housing complex in Long Beach called the Villages at Cabrillo. Here the Army veteran receives medical and mental health care and stays in a studio apartment with donated furniture, including a side table where she keeps the picture of her late parents she managed to hang onto while living on the streets.

Homeless advocates hope the same partners that run the Villages can transform neglected buildings and overgrown grounds at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center campus into a therapeutic community with permanent supportive housing for approximately 1,200 veterans. There's a lot riding on U.S.VETS, Century Housing and Thomas Safran & Associates, who formed the West Los Angeles Veterans Collective and were selected to oversee redevelopment of the VA campus.

Los Angeles has the highest concentration of homeless veterans in the United States. They are competing for shelter with scores of other homeless people in one of the most expensive real-estate markets in the country. Since 2012, rents have risen twice as fast as the maximum subsidy provided to veterans through the federal HUD-VASH (VA Supportive Housing) voucher program, says UCLA law professor emeritus and homeless expert Gary Blasi.

VA, meanwhile, lost more than two years trying to launch the project before bringing in the collective to take over as principal developer. As a result, 490 units of new housing won't be ready in 2020, as promised in a legal settlement

regarding mismanagement of the campus. There are also questions about infrastructure funding, and the prospect of a legal challenge from the upscale neighborhoods that border the VA property.

The collective is confident it can clear those hurdles, based on their success with the Villages and other projects. "We are committed, and the experience we have shows we can do it," says Andrew Gross of Thomas Safran & Associates, which specializes in developing, financing and managing low-income housing communities.

It's crucial that the West Los Angeles project succeed, says Chanin Nuntavong, director of The American Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division, who visited the VA campus in February. "Our goal is to help get the number of homeless veterans to functional zero as quickly as possible. That means making housing available to all of the homeless veterans who want it."

NAVAL HISTORY With financial support from Century Housing, U.S.VETS opened its first housing project in Inglewood, Calif., in the early 1990s at the urging of the late 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Harry Pregerson, a tireless homeless advocate and World War II Marine Corps veteran who was wounded at Okinawa. A few years later, the city of Long Beach asked the partnership to take over the shuttered Navy housing that became the Villages.

"Our idea was to put all of the pieces together for veterans to be housed, rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community," says U.S.VETS CEO Steve Peck, a Vietnam War Marine Corps veteran.

The naval housing complex has been renovated and expanded by Century Housing with the help of more than \$100 million in state and federal tax credits and about \$34 million in support from the city of Long Beach, Los Angeles County, the state, private investors and donors. It cost about \$22 million in 2017 to operate the Villages and provide services to the individuals, families and children who live there. Roughly \$1.2 million of that was covered by HUD-VASH rent subsidies.



After settling a lawsuit over misuse of its West Los Angeles campus, VA may finally be on track to provide housing and other assistance to at least 1,200 homeless and disabled veterans.

By all accounts, the Villages has been a huge success. It scores high marks from homeless advocates, social service agencies and former U.S. servicemembers. Approximately half the 1,500 people living there are veterans.

This includes 150 former servicemembers who are in transitional housing. Another 550 are permanent residents.

The Villages has in-patient drug and alcohol treatment, a VA medical clinic, job counseling and a range of other services provided by approximately 30 nonprofits and government agencies ranging from Catholic Charities to VA. There are also classes, from cooking and nutrition to yoga and meditation. "If you are homeless, everything is short-term," Peck says. "Here we want to break that cycle and get them thinking long-term."

Veterans make this transition in a peaceful, tree-lined neighborhood with a volleyball sandlot and outdoor basketball court. A courtyard near the U.S.VETS office hosts a farmers market and special events. There's a clocktower named for Pregerson and a mural that includes Sam Davis, one of the first veterans to move to the Villages. He stayed until his death in 2017. There's also a dining hall that provides three meals a day, though permanent residents also have access to their own kitchens.

Approximately 97 percent of its residents are still permanently housed a year after they arrive. The number of women seeking substance-abuse treatment has increased fivefold since the Villages started providing women's-only housing. Women from across the country also come here for the military sexual trauma treatment program.

"Some experienced military sexual trauma 30 years ago and never dealt with it," Peck says. "We have everyone from a 25-year-old to a 60-year-old."

Degnan doesn't say much about the military sexual trauma she experienced during her 16-year Army career. She became a nurse after leaving the service, working for the Vet Center in Truth or Consequences, N.M., and later joining a Johns Hopkins vaccine research team on the Navajo Nation. "I was doing OK," Degnan says of her post-Army life. "Then about 2009 or '10 somebody grabbed me again. I ended up on the street."

Moving to the Villages was difficult. "I ran away the first day," she says. "I tried a regular shelter in



Army veteran Melissa Degnan is grateful to have a studio apartment at the Villages of Cabrillo, a former Navy housing complex in Long Beach, Calif., after four years living on the streets. She considers herself a success story and wants to see similar homeless veteran housing built at the West Los Angeles VA campus.

Orange County. The first night a guy tried to crawl into bed with me.”

U.S.VETS connected her with intensive group therapy at the Long Beach VA, which has also been integral to her recovery. She still struggles with health issues, but says the medical care she receives at the Villages helps makes them manageable.

“I consider myself to be a success story,” Degnan says. “I consider my life to have been saved by Volunteers of America, U.S.VETS and the Villages of Cabrillo.” Building a similar veterans housing program at the West Los Angeles VA is vital, she says. “I know how many people need it.”

Veterans John Sanchez and Pat Johnson, more recent arrivals at the Villages, echo her support for building a bigger, better version of the Villages at the West Los Angeles VA.

“Everything is so expensive here,” Sanchez, a Navy corpsman and Vietnam combat veteran, says of the Los Angeles area housing market. “There’s just a lot of us who are S.O.L.”

HISTORIC MISSION The West Los Angeles VA was built on 387 acres given to the U.S. government in 1888 for the express purpose of housing former servicemembers. At its peak, the campus was home to 4,000 veterans, a post office, churches, theaters and a 10,000-volume library. VA quietly ended that service during the Vietnam War, effectively pushing mentally disabled veterans to the streets. The buildings that housed them were largely abandoned. In the ensuing decades, VA leased more than 100

acres of the campus for everything from a private school’s athletic center to a hotel chain’s laundry facility. Much of that ended after a coalition sued VA on behalf of severely mentally disabled homeless veterans. The 2015 settlement included VA’s pledge to build permanent supportive housing for at least 1,200 veterans.

After struggling to get the new housing project underway, VA brought in a senior executive, Meghan Flanz, to oversee the effort in 2018. The agency then hired the West Los Angeles Veterans Collective as the principal developer. Homeless veteran advocates say those decisions have gotten the development back on track.

There are still significant hurdles. There’s no funding for the streets, sidewalk sewers, waterlines and other infrastructure needed to accommodate the permanent supportive housing and other amenities that will transform this neglected part of the campus into a nurturing neighborhood. Some worry the nearby Brentwood or Westwood neighborhoods will sue over the environmental impact statement, an echo of a lawsuit aimed at blocking construction of a new VA hospital near Louisville.

The collective is optimistic. “There’s so much political will to get it done,” Peck says. “I don’t believe anyone can stop it.”

Blasi is more cautious. “Political capital comes and goes,” he says. Veterans advocates will have to stay on top of the West Los Angeles project and in touch with their elected officials for the new housing to come to fruition.

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Howard Payne became one of the first residents of Building 209 on the West Los Angeles VA campus, the only permanent supportive housing opened since the agency agreed to build 1,200 apartments to settle a lawsuit in 2015.

“There have been real champions of veterans on both sides of the aisle over the past few years and still are,” Blasi says. “But there seems to be little appetite in the current administration for doing more to help with the basic needs of people, even those people who put their lives on the line for the rest of us.”

NEW BEGINNINGS Howard Payne is an example of what the West Los Angeles VA project could mean for veterans sleeping on Skid Row, under highway bridges or around the perimeter of the VA campus. He’s one of about 50 former servicemembers living in the only permanent supportive housing on the West Los Angeles VA campus.

Payne joined the Army to escape his abusive father. He served in Vietnam and Korea and has been homeless periodically since leaving the military in 1986. The most recent episode was in 2015, after downsizing cost him his job as a machine operator at a newspaper in Texas. It nearly cost him his life. Camped on a friend’s couch in Abilene with a shotgun near at hand, he drank a 12-pack of beer, a bottle of bourbon and other liquor before calling the veterans suicide prevention hotline. Payne doesn’t remember making that call. He does recall a woman and six police officers showing up, relieving him of his shotgun and persuading him to go to a treatment facility. “I told the woman, ‘Thank goodness I was so messed up I couldn’t find the shotgun shells,’” Payne says.

Two weeks later, he was offered the opportunity to come to the domiciliary at the West Los Angeles VA campus. After Payne sobered up, he moved into Building 209, a 1940s-era structure that had just been renovated thanks to \$20 million in funding from Congress. He pays his rent with the help of a HUD-VASH voucher.

Building 209 is run by a nonprofit called Step Up, whose staff members help veterans living there navigate the VA system and obtain other support services they need, says CEO Tod Lipka. “Housing is a means to an end, a sense of belonging, a sense of community.”

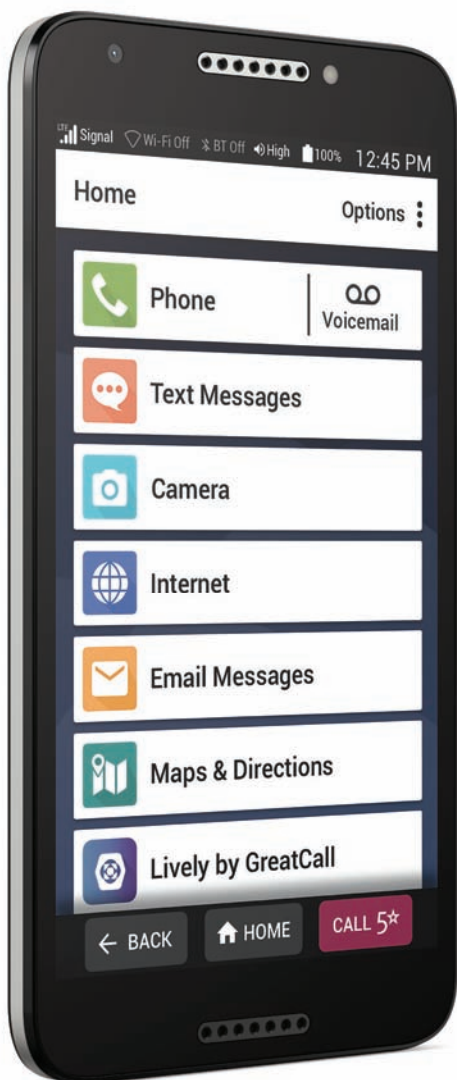
Payne has a spacious one-bedroom apartment, does property management work for Step Up, and makes plans to visit his children and grandchildren – including his oldest daughter, who is scheduled to have surgery for a brain tumor. He’s incredibly grateful to have this place to live.

“I’ve got everything I need, thanks to the housing here,” he says. “The best thing is the serenity.”

To the people pushing VA to deliver on its promise to create a home for 1,200 more Howard Paynes and Melissa Degnans, it’s part of society’s debt. “We’re committed to seeing this happen,” Nuntavong says. “These veterans have served their country. It’s our duty to take care of them, rehabilitate them and get them back into society as contributing members.” 🌿

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

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Inner City Law Center steps in to help LA's homeless veterans struggling to find stable housing

A Marine Corps veteran and his wife who lost their apartment after cancer forced him out of his job. A Navy veteran suffering from military sexual trauma has slept almost everywhere but a home of her own for 18 years. A former soldier used alcohol and drugs to deal with chronic leg pain and depression and ended up living under a bridge.

These are the stories of Los Angeles County's homeless veterans who struggle to find stable housing.

Take Jerry Lyles. A Marine who served at Camp Lejeune, N.C., in the 1980s, he was diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer in June 2017. Pain and fatigue forced him to leave his job at the U.S. Postal Service, where he had worked for 30 years. He and his disabled wife lost their health insurance. Medical bills consumed their savings. And because prostate cancer is not one of the diseases DoD and VA consider connected to the toxin-laced drinking water at Camp Lejeune that has sickened tens of thousands of Marines and families, the Lyles were on their own.

On the eve of their eviction, Lyles went to the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center and asked for a VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) voucher. VA refused because he hadn't been chronically homeless for a year, he says.

"They told me I could sleep in the parking lot," Lyles says, referring to a program that provides homeless veterans a secure place to park on the VA campus after hours. Lyles and his wife instead moved into their son's apartment. They slept in the only bedroom, and their son slept on the couch.

"I didn't think I'd ever get in this position," Lyles says. "I'm supposed to be the breadwinner."

Lyles connected with attorney Ariana Barlas at the Inner City Law Center, just off Skid Row, soon after VA turned him away. She's helped him get Social Security disability and apply for VA benefits. Because of her advocacy, he received a HUD-VASH voucher in early April – nearly two years after he lost his job and health insurance – and he and his wife finally found a new apartment in July. "The miracles didn't start jumping out until we came here," Lyles says of the law center.

Monique Edwards was unable to get help from VA because of her other-than-honorable discharge. That was the result of debilitating depression, which began after she was assaulted by a mess cook while deployed on a Navy destroyer, she says.

Her dreams of going to college on the GI Bill vanished. Back home in Los Angeles in 2001, Edwards became angry and isolated. She began abusing marijuana and alcohol.

"Everybody told me they couldn't help me because I wasn't service-connected," she says of her efforts to turn things around. She sometimes found work as a cosmetologist and



Military sexual assault led Monique Edwards, right, down a path of depression, substance abuse, and eventually homelessness.

paid her own rent, even taking in her pregnant sister at one point, she says. Then these small breaths of good fortune unraveled and she was sleeping in her car again.

Edwards finally got access to a women's inpatient treatment program run by a private nonprofit at the West Los Angeles VA with the help of a family friend. She also received a HUD-VASH voucher, but couldn't find a landlord in a safe neighborhood willing to rent to her. "It wasn't helpful because no one takes them," Edwards says of the voucher. "Or they think because you are a veteran with PTSD, you are going to tear things up."

In 2016, Edwards filed a VA claim for PTSD due to military sexual trauma and other service-connected injuries, and petitioned to have her discharge status upgraded for the purposes of receiving VA benefits. It took a year for her to get a hearing – and just a few weeks for her disability claim to be rejected. "I felt assaulted all over again," she says.

Edwards appealed with the help of Amanda Powell at Inner City Law Center. VA granted her disability claims and discharge upgrade in February. It took another two and a half months – and prodding from Powell – for VA to schedule the compensation and pension exams Edwards should have received three years earlier, Powell says. VA finally granted Edwards' PTSD claim in June, and she is working on a discharge upgrade and accessing her GI Bill benefits.

Roderick Sampson may have the most upbeat story, despite all he's lost. He injured his leg playing basketball while at advanced infantry training in 1976. He went to college after leaving the Army in 1979 and became a high school counselor.

Sampson then learned to cook and worked for hotels and country clubs until his leg problem became acute about 10 years ago. Soon he couldn't stand for long periods of time. He frequently fell, a considerable hazard in a commercial kitchen. "Now I walk like Frankenstein," Sampson says.

He stopped working and starting self-medicating. He obtained a HUD-VASH voucher and an apartment, then lost both because of drinking and drugs. He discovered crack, and he ended up living under a bridge and spent his days hustling for money to buy dope or booze.

Sampson eventually accepted help from a stranger who had periodically given him money and an offer of a hand up. He landed at a sober living facility in Pasadena and then the domiciliary at West LA. Barlas helped get the disability rating for his leg injury increased from 10 percent to 100 percent.

He also received another HUD-VASH voucher and found an apartment in Pasadena in April. "I'm not homeless anymore, thanks to Ariana," he says. "It's just a blessing."

– Ken Olsen

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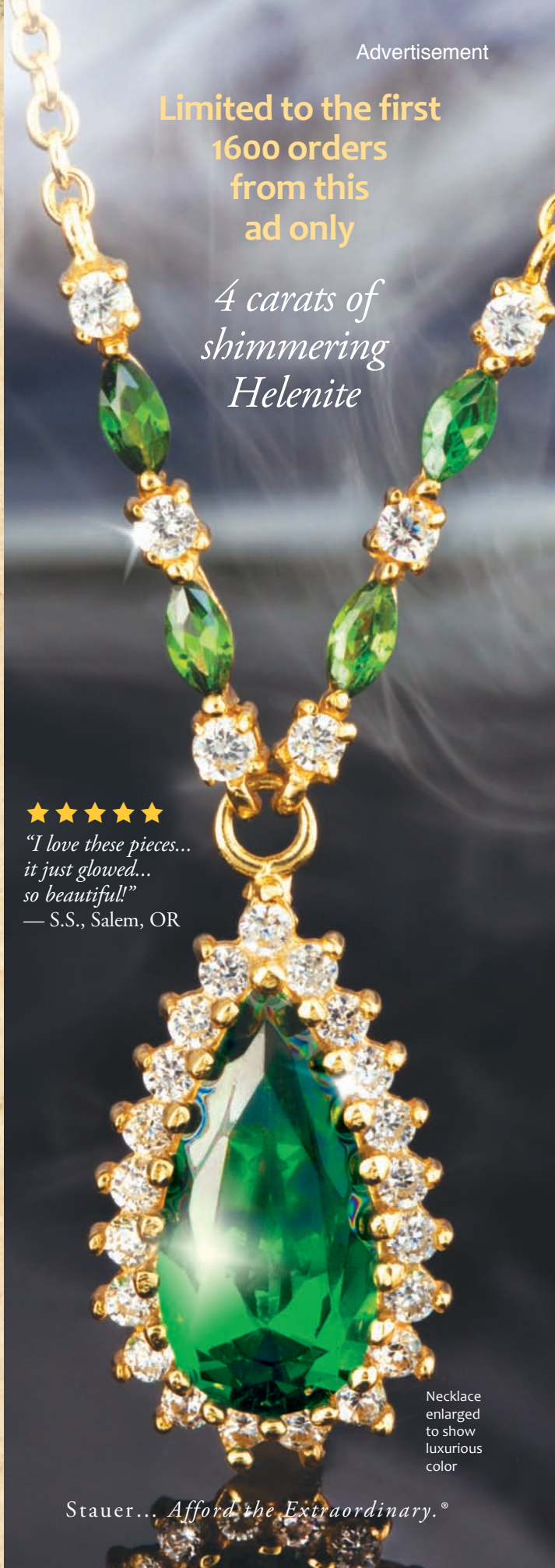
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TO STRENGTHEN A NATION / THE AMERICAN LEGION STORY

PART 16



THIS WE BELIEVE

*We must rededicate ourselves to the ideals of our organization,
be active, and keep faith with our fallen comrades.*

BY E. ROY STONE JR.

In this final installment of “To Strengthen a Nation,” a 16-part American Legion Magazine series that has explored aspects of the organization’s first century, the words of Past National Commander E. Roy Stone Jr. are offered as a timeless statement. This essay first appeared in the September 1994 75th-anniversary issue of The American Legion Magazine. On Sept. 12, 1994, it was entered into the congressional record by Rep. G.V. “Sonny”

Montgomery of Mississippi, then chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Stone’s essay is excerpted here.

For 48 years, I have had the high privilege of serving on the national level of The American Legion, the world’s largest veterans organization. From the day I walked through a naval hospital ward in Oakland, Calif., and saw the mutilated bodies of World War II GIs,

I knew that I wanted to do something to help veterans and their families.

When I returned to my home state of South Carolina after World War II, I went to our state’s only veterans hospital and saw men being put in the hallways – the VA had a waiting list of over 800 GIs. Later, I went to the funerals of some of the men who were stored in the halls because VA didn’t have the space to treat them.

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TO STRENGTHEN A NATION / THE AMERICAN LEGION STORY

"I suspect that Grandfather would not be surprised in the least at the endurance of this organization, founded as it is on a fundamental principle: a veteran is a veteran. Ted Jr. only saw the soldier. Nothing else. Because nothing else mattered. Not race, rank or duty station. Not social position, education or money. Not sex. The only things that mattered then and now: service, comradeship, loyalty. For Grandfather and all the founders, this was clear: those who gave all deserved all in return."

American Legion 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee Chairman Theodore Roosevelt IV, grandson of American Legion founding leader Theodore Roosevelt Jr., speaking at a Department of Missouri centennial celebration on July 13, 2019

After seeing all of this, I became an active Legionnaire – determined that I would try to alleviate crowded conditions in our VA hospitals; give sympathy to the suffering; give strength to the weak; and to keep faith with my fallen friends.

I was determined that their supreme sacrifice would not be in vain. And so, I joined The American Legion, whose principles of right and wrong have become an integral part of the American way of life.

I want to take an opportunity to salute the ideals that have made The American Legion the unselfish and unequalled champion of the veteran.

This we believe:

WE BELIEVE A VETERAN IS A VETERAN.

One of the great accomplishments of The American Legion has been making veterans' benefits and rehabilitation a non-partisan issue. If something is good for veterans, the Legion will be for it. And no matter which side of the aisle raises an issue in Congress, the Legion hollers the same challenge: "How will this help veterans?"

Legionnaires are Republicans, and they are Democrats. They are senators, congressmen, firemen, doctors, lawyers, clergymen, insurance salesmen, grocers, barbers, and career military men and women. They

are old, and they are young. They are rich, and they are poor.

The Legion also doesn't make a distinction between officer and enlisted, Army or Navy, Air Force or Marines, Coast Guard or Merchant Marine. All of us have served our country during times of war, and we share a common experience and in many cases common sacrifices.

We live with memories of war that humble us and fill us with a sense of spiritual connection to the freedom that Americans enjoy. We have a stake, if you will, in seeing our country live on and grow strong because we witnessed so many give their blood and sometimes their lives toward this end.

While the Legion is non-partisan, many of you know that there are a lot of politicians in the Legion. We are sort of a cross between a lobbying group and an advocacy organization that looks out for America's veterans. And our members give us a voice that can be heard in small towns and big cities from coast to coast.

We believe the contributions of America's veterans and their sacrifices have earned them special consideration. But like the team that is the U.S. Armed Forces, no veteran is more or less deserving of that which has been earned with blood.

The Legion is committed to seeing VA live up to the inscription on the plaque that

rests on its Washington, D.C., headquarters building: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."

WE BELIEVE PROMISES MADE TO VETERANS MUST BE PROMISES KEPT.

The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is an ideal, a set of missions and battles that can never be decisively won or lost – only fought for.

Despite the lessons of history and the proud heritage that should elevate the veteran to the highest degree of respect, there will appear on the horizon those who will want to cut the VA budget, eliminate beds in VA hospitals, and cut down or cut out veterans' benefits. But The American Legion has always maintained that promises made to veterans must be promises kept.

Many short-sighted policy-making officials and their followers will look upon the veteran not as a hero, but as an economic liability. The American Legion, often as a lone voice, has argued for honoring the commitment the nation makes to those it sends into battle: If you serve your country, you will not be forgotten.

When World War II veterans returned home, the Legion – by writing and introducing the GI



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TO STRENGTHEN A NATION / THE AMERICAN LEGION STORY

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And when the families of our POW/MIAs could expect no help from the U.S. government and little media attention, the Legion came through with recommendations to end their suffering and obtain the fullest possible accounting.

In veterans affairs and rehabilitation, the Legion has always stood by veterans as they stood by their country in war.

WE BELIEVE IN PATRIOTISM AND AMERICANISM OVER ALL OTHER “ISMS.”

The founders would be very proud of what the Legion has

Equality and Americanism

On Oct. 17, 1923, the American Legion National Convention in San Francisco passed a resolution that is still in effect expressing its firm support of equal rights and opportunities “without distinction as to race, color, creed or class.” The resolution states that any individual, group or organization that “creates or fosters racial, religious or class strife among our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of guilt, or infliction of punishment, to be un-American, a menace to our liberties and destructive to our fundamental law.”

done for this country because The American Legion has always emphasized patriotism and Americanism over all other “isms.”

We have pressed for a strong national defense when others have blindly accepted the lull of peacetime safety.

We have educated America’s young men and women in love of God and Country and helped

nurture new generations of great Americans. And we have fought communism and fascism all over the world through our efforts on Capitol Hill.

We believe in a strong America – an America that has the economic and military might to keep democracy alive here at home and overseas.

WE BELIEVE IN KEEPING FAITH WITH OUR FALLEN COMRADES.

We must rededicate ourselves to the ideals of our organization, be active, and keep faith with our fallen comrades. We must gird ourselves for any legislative fight that may become necessary, and see that any veteran who needs hospital or nursing care will have it.

No compromises. Right is right. Wrong is wrong.

As we celebrate our years of service to community, state and nation, we are proud of our past record of accomplishments. We look forward to an even brighter future.

God preserve our country. God bless The American Legion. 🌿



STONE’S TIMELESS WORDS REVIVED IN NEW LEGION VIDEO

American Legion Past National Commander E. Roy Stone’s essay “This We Believe” has been revived in a video for new generations of veterans. Longtime Department of South Carolina Adjutant Jimmy E. Hawk provides narration in the video, which shows the many faces of American Legion members today.

The video is posted online at legion.org/legiontv. To view or share it on social media, find the Honor & Remembrance playlist. To download a copy, click on the “Promotional Videos” link at legion.org/legiontv.

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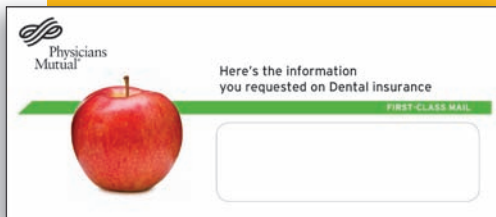


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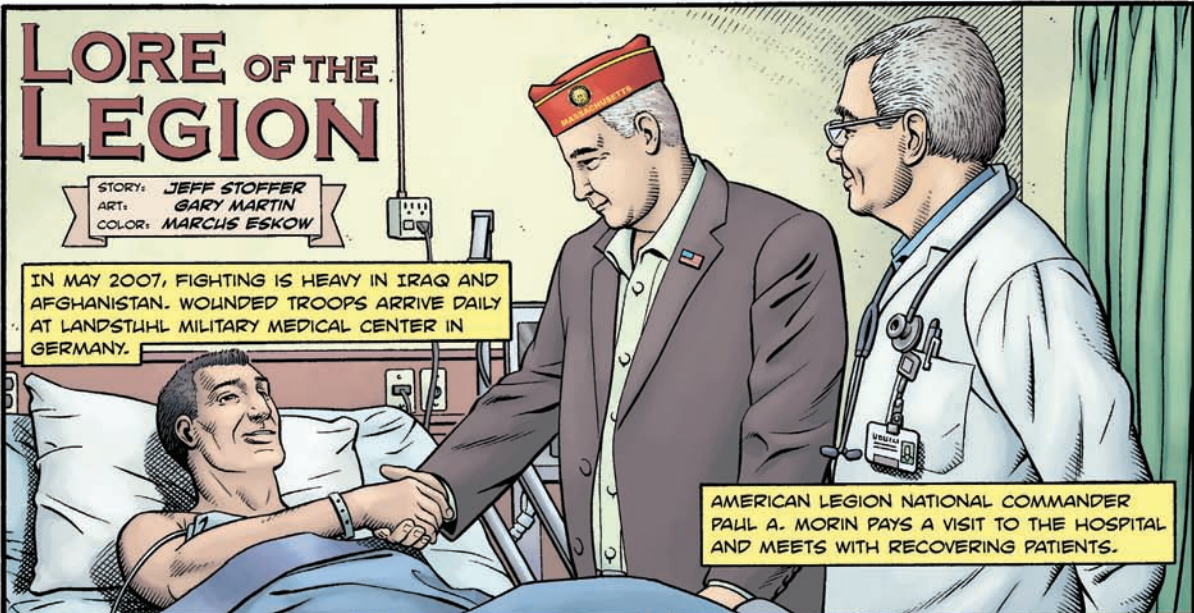
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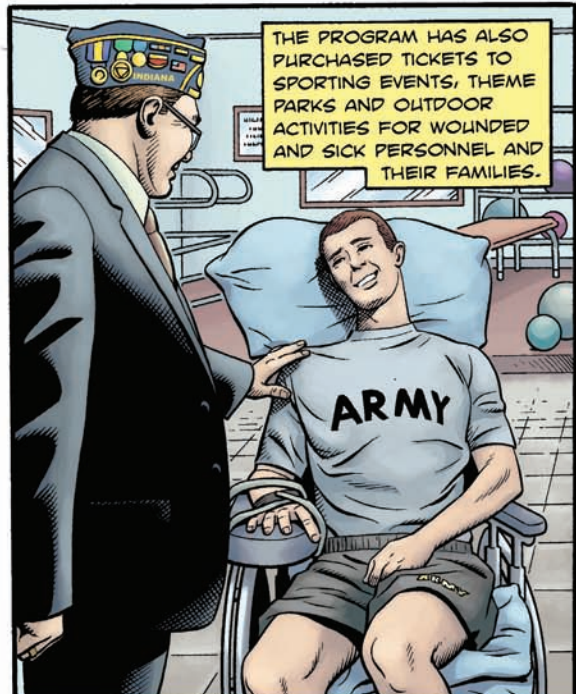
MORIN CALLS ON THE AMERICAN LEGION TO RAISE \$50,000 TO PURCHASE TVS, MP3 PLAYERS, VIDEO GAMES AND CALLING CARDS FOR THE PATIENTS.

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Vice President Mike Pence spoke to The American Legion Magazine prior to addressing delegates at the 101st National Convention. Photo by Josh Marshall

'A great debt of gratitude'

Vice President Mike Pence credits the Legion for his love of the U.S. Constitution.

Even Vice President Mike Pence's political opponents acknowledge his strong communication skills. That's not surprising, considering Pence was a radio talk-show host before winning a series of elections that took him to Congress, the Indiana governorship, and now the vice presidency. Less known is the critical role The American Legion played in helping a young Pence hone those speaking skills. As a student at Columbus North High School in 1976, he was runner-up in the American Legion Department of Indiana Oratorical Speech Contest. The following year, as a senior, Pence won the competition.

At the 101st National Convention in Indianapolis in August, Pence spoke with *The American Legion Magazine* about the organization's influence in his life and its continuing commitment to the nation's veterans and youth.

When it comes to developing good citizens, how important are American Legion youth programs?

The work The American Legion has done helping young people understand the ideals of this country has had an incalculable impact on the life of this nation. I really do believe that whether it's Boys Nation, Boys State or the Auxiliary's Girls Nation, these are the leaders of tomorrow. And their predecessors in so many cases are the leaders of today. It's a debt that the American people owe The American Legion.

What do you remember about participating in the American Legion Department of Indiana Oratorical Contest?

It was an enormously important experience in my youth – not so much the competition as the study I had to make of our Constitution, to write



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the speech and to prepare for the extemporaneous portions. I credit the American Legion Oratorical Contest with the beginning of my love affair with the Constitution of the United States. The way the contest to this day challenges young people to understand our glorious Constitution, to understand the ideals that are the foundation of this country, is an incredible contribution to the life of the nation.

For me, sitting in the library in Columbus, Ind., pouring over books about the Constitution, beginning my own journey of understanding the principles enshrined there of limited government, of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to keep and bear arms, and understanding the historical foundation of all of those things that have been defended by our veterans throughout all of the history of this nation ... I would tell you that experience in so many ways lit the pilot light of my love for the Constitution, which endures to this day.

What about our Constitution sets it apart from the governing documents of other countries?

Well, ours is singularly the most successful republic in the history of the world. And it was all grounded on the ideals enshrined in our Declaration but expressed in the framework of the Constitution – that ours is a limited federal government with specific and enumerated powers. Our rights are enshrined in our Bill of Rights and thereafter, and in so many ways it represents the foundation of what has been the success of this country. I truly do believe that the source of American greatness has always been our faith in God, our freedom and our vast natural resources. And our freedom has been preserved, maintained and defended all in a foundation of the Constitution of the United States.

Did the communication skills you developed through the program help you in your careers as a radio show host and public servant?

There is simply no question that the opportunity to compete with some of Indiana's best and brightest in the American Legion Oratorical Contest sharpened my skills. It was the way The American Legion challenged me to go study the Constitution, and understand it and explain it and be able to defend it on my feet, that had the greatest impact on my life and my career, an impact to this day. I still have the textbook written by a history teacher from Columbus that I used in my preparation for the contest.

You are the son of a Korean War veteran and the father of a U.S. Marine. Do you have advice to the parents of children who are considering military service? What is the most difficult challenge for Blue Star families?

Thank you for mentioning my dad. He's (been) gone 30 years. He is a Bronze Star recipient from Korea. He fought on Pork Chop Hill. My dad never considered himself a hero. When he spoke of heroes, it was friends he lost. When I arrived in South Korea my first time as vice president, I was deeply moved at posters that were up around the capital of South Korea that mentioned my dad by name: Lt. Edward J. Pence. Our son, a captain in the Marine Corps, and our daughter, (who) just got engaged to a Navy pilot – are among the greatest sources of pride for Karen and me. We greatly admire our son and daughter-in-law's commitment, and our future son-in-law and daughter's commitment, to serve this country.

My wife's very involved in efforts to support military families and spouses. There are unique challenges, not just during deployment but also when military personnel are assigned to another base or squadron or unit; that family's uprooted, and we're working hard to make sure that spouses are able to continue their careers at the new assignment or have the support they need during deployments. I'm proud of the progress we made.

I think anybody who has a desire to serve our country in public office would do well to think about starting their careers by serving our country in uniform. It isn't the path my life took, but for me to see the men and women of our military today, the caliber and the character of those who have served, I can't think of a better place to start a life, to start a career, to start a life of service, than serving in our armed forces.

Is there anything you'd like to tell members of The American Legion?

The Bible says if you owe debts, pay debts. If honor, then honor. If respect, then respect. I want members of The American Legion to know that their vice president and my family feel a great debt of gratitude to the Legion for what it has meant in my life ... helping to shape my views, my love for the Constitution, but also the way The American Legion is there each and every day for our active-duty military, for our veterans, and making sure the youth of America understand the ideals and principles upon which this nation was founded. I just want to say thanks.

– John Raughter

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A flower floats atop the water where oil seeps out of the sunken Arizona during a memorial service marking the attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu. Photo by Kent Nishimura/Getty

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“December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”



USS West Virginia BB 48 Wikimedia Commons

3 Navy ships lost (*Arizona* BB 39, *Oklahoma* BB 37, *Utah* AG 16)

18 Navy ships repaired and returned to service (*California* BB 44, *West Virginia* BB 48, *Maryland* BB 46, *Nevada* BB 36, *Tennessee* BB 43, *Pennsylvania* BB 38, *Cassin* DD 372, *Downes* DD 375, *Shaw* DD 373, *Helm* DD 388, *Helena* CL 50, *Honolulu* CL 48, *Raleigh* CL 7, *Curtiss* AV 4, *Vestal* AR 4, *Oglala* CM 4, *Sotoyoma* YT 9, Floating Drydock YFD 2)

1 Navy ship sunk, raised, repaired and present at Tokyo Bay during Japan's formal surrender Sept. 2, 1945 (*West Virginia* BB 48)

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a speech to Congress on Dec. 8, 1941

Source: Naval History and Heritage Command

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– Janet F.

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RAPID FIRE

ACTIVE DUTY

B-21 in sky by '21?

The new B-21 Raider long-range stealth bomber is expected to make its first flight in December 2021, Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen Wilson says. But according to *Air Force Magazine*, the branch doesn't expect an initial operating capability with the B-21 before the mid-2020s.



U.S. Air Force artist rendering

ACTIVE DUTY

One couple, two commanders

A husband-and-wife team – both Marine Corps colonels – recently took command of separate units on the same day. Col. Amy Ebitz took over as commander of Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations East at Camp Lejeune, N.C. A few hours later, Col. Curtis Ebitz took command of Marine Corps Air Station New River, also in North Carolina. As *Stars and Stripes* reports, this won't be the first time they've commanded a unit at the same time. While stationed in Okinawa, Japan, Curtis Ebitz commanded Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron One with 1st Marine Aircraft Wing from 2013 to 2015, while Amy Ebitz commanded the 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion for III Marine Expeditionary Force from 2012 to 2014.

"It's a 50-50 relationship," Curtis told *Stars and Stripes*. "It's what we like to call balanced excellence – finding the right balance between personal and professional life. Additionally, it's been nice to have a sounding board for work-related issues, and knowing when to separate work from family."

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Miranda DeKorte



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Photo by Ryan Young

FALL MEETINGS

Oxford eyes \$25 million goal for Veterans & Children Foundation

In his opening remarks during the National Executive Committee's Fall Meetings in Indianapolis on Oct. 16, National Commander Bill Oxford reminded Legionnaires that sales and production of the American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin series will cease after Dec. 31. Until then, the coins continue to be a great fundraiser, holiday gift and conversation-starter about the Legion's Four Pillars, programs and advocacy efforts, he said.

At the start of the new year, Oxford will shift his fundraising emphasis to The American Legion's Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF), which has a goal of \$25 million.

"What a great, life-changing resource this could be for future generations of veterans and their families," Oxford said. While \$25 million is a lot of money, a similar goal was achieved by Legionnaires in 1924, with a membership of 800,000. They raised \$5 million for the Endowment Fund, which is about \$30 million in today's dollars, according to Marketing Commission Chairman Mike Rohan of Wisconsin.

"We owe this to our veterans and our children to do this," Rohan said during his remarks to the NEC. In coming months, the Marketing Commission will work with departments on fundraising efforts, including asking department commanders to take on the VCF as their project.

The goal is absolutely achievable if we have strength in numbers, Oxford added. During the 2019 membership year, 63,000 new members were recruited into the Legion. Oxford's goal for 2020 is 100,000.

Thanks to the LEGION Act, the organization can grow exponentially, as an estimated 4.2 million more veterans are now eligible to join, he said.

According to an Oct. 4 report, membership is up by more than 7,000 compared to the previous year. "It's still very early, and we must continue the momentum," Oxford said. "We had 3.3 million members in 1946. There is no reason to believe we can't someday reach that level again. But we must be visible in our communities."

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in *all* wars ...

Newly amended clause of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion, per Resolution 1, passed by the NEC. The phrase was previously "Great Wars," and originally "Great War," and is the only part of the preamble changed since 1919.

SELECTED RESOLUTIONS OF THE FALL MEETINGS

AMERICANISM

2 Changes to structure, awards for National Oratorical Contest

9 Updates eligibility for Samsung American Legion scholarships

10 100th anniversary remembrance of 1919 Centralia incident

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

6 Cooperation, activities to mark 75th anniversary of World War II

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

14 Encourages legislation to reauthorize and fund Small Business Administration's Patriot Express Loan

16 Develop training for employers who utilize veterans preference in their hiring practices

The full text of all American Legion resolutions is online: archive.legion.org

SHELBY COUPLE RECEIVES LEGION'S PATRIOT AWARD

Eddie and Millie Holbrook of Shelby, N.C., who led the bid 10 years ago for Shelby to become the permanent home of the American Legion Baseball World Series, received the American Legion Patriot Award during the NEC's Fall Meetings.

National Commander Bill Oxford was commander of the Department of North Carolina when Shelby prepared to make its bid, and was in the Legion's NEC Room when the Holbrooks brought it to the committee.

"The excitement and enthusiasm Eddie brings to the table is beyond what anybody can imagine," Oxford said.

Accepting the award, Eddie said, "As of today, it has surpassed our expectations. Our dream No. 1 was that we make you proud. No. 2 was to make our community proud."

This is the second Patriot Award given by the Legion this year. The first was to Mitch Daniels, former Indiana governor and current president of Purdue University.



Photo by Ben Mikessell

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steering lever so it's simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **Zinger** is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk— you can even gate-check it at the airport like a stroller. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

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The Zinger Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair, and has not been submitted to the FDA for review or clearance. Zinger is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2019 firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond, Inc.

IN MEMORIAM

Buskirk 'gentleman, great Legionnaire'

George A. Buskirk Jr., national treasurer of The American Legion, passed away Oct. 8. He was 70.

A member of American Legion Post 510 at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis, Buskirk was appointed national treasurer during the 80th National Convention in New Orleans in 1988. The national treasurer serves as the Legion's chief financial officer, and is responsible for the custody and management of the organization's assets.

"The American Legion has lost more than a national treasurer," National Commander Bill Oxford said. "We lost a treasure. George Buskirk was the kindest of gentlemen. We will certainly miss his sound financial leadership, but we will mostly miss our time with this affable, decent and smart man."

A retired major general in the Army National Guard, Buskirk served in the U.S. military from 1967 to 2005.

"He served his country during the Vietnam War and rose through the ranks of the Indiana National Guard to become its adjutant general," Oxford said. "A senior executive in the banking industry, we were fortunate to have this great Legionnaire as our national treasurer for 21 years. We were more fortunate to have known him."

Past National Commander Jake Comer echoed those sentiments. "George was an outstanding gentleman," Comer said. "He did his job well. He was a great Legionnaire. We will all miss him."

The U.S. economy had its share of lows and highs during Buskirk's tenure, but he had a knack for forecasting.

"George was surprisingly adept at predicting how things would go, either up or down," said Past National Commander Harold "Butch" Miller. "Over the years, I gained a great deal of respect not only for his friendship but his passion for veterans and his business experience. He turned out to be a great friend and someone I'll miss tremendously, especially his smiling face at our meetings and knowing that The American Legion financially was in good hands."

American Legion National Finance Chairman Gaither Keener recalled Buskirk's personable nature.

"A man's legacy can be defined not only by how he served his family, friends and business affiliations but by how he treated those he came in contact with," Keener said. "Not



only did George have a keen understanding of business and finances, he was genuine and gracious to all those he met, from a new American Legion member to those who have ascended the ranks."

Ken Danilson served as chairman of the National Finance Commission from 1998 to 2015. "While his title conveyed the financial aspect of his job, it did not fully represent what George meant to The American Legion, his close friends and his loving family," Danilson said. "He was a true patriot, and I will miss him dearly."

An Indianapolis native, Buskirk received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Butler University in 1971 and his law degree from the Indiana University School of Law in 1975. He was a member of the American Bar Association, the Indiana State Bar Association and the Indianapolis Bar Association.

American Legion National Adjutant Dan Wheeler praised Buskirk for his decades of service to state, nation, America's veterans and countless others.

"His influence is of course well known within the American Legion Family, but it goes well beyond that," Wheeler said. "Nearly 40 years in the military. A board member for numerous organizations, including Boy Scouts of America, the Indiana War Memorial Commission and the American Red Cross. All of these organizations – but especially The American Legion – are better off because of George Buskirk."

In 2015, a street in Lawrence Township was named for Buskirk. He and his father served at Fort Benjamin Harrison before it became a "poster child" for a successful Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) transition, and in the years since, more than 50 commercial enterprises and hundreds of homes have sprouted on the former base grounds. Buskirk Drive was "one of the greatest honors of my life," he said.

Buskirk's volunteerism included serving as president of the Veterans Day Council of Indianapolis, USO of Indiana and Day Nursery Foundation of Indianapolis, as well as a board member for the Indianapolis Humane Society and the Ivy Tech Foundation.

He is survived by three children and five grandchildren.

– Henry Howard

WAR ON TERRORISM

775,477 U.S. troops deployed to Afghanistan since October 2001

222,630 U.S. troops who deployed twice

99,046 U.S. troops who deployed three times

40,698 U.S. troops who deployed four times

12,660 U.S. troops who deployed five times

9,526 U.S. troops who deployed more than five times

2,438 U.S. troops killed

20,000+ U.S. troops wounded

Source: The Washington Post

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CAREERS

Federal job resources for veterans

Ten years ago, President Barack Obama signed an executive order establishing the Veterans

Employment Initiative, to promote the hiring of veterans by the U.S. federal government and serve as a model for the private sector. He and other government officials recognized that the training veterans receive during their military service, as well as their motivation for public service, is essential to fulfilling federal agencies' staffing needs.

The federal government offers several online resources to assist veterans in preparing for new jobs and careers, learning about the federal hiring process and identifying current job opportunities. Three of the most valuable resources every veteran should use while making a career transition are:

- **BLS.gov** The Bureau of Labor Statistics' site is a treasure trove of information about hundreds of occupations and their experience and educational requirements, salaries, geographic locations and more. The amount of data on this website is vast. Most importantly, it includes employment forecasts through the year 2026, allowing you to explore job opportunities on the rise.

- **FedsHireVets.gov** This is a unique site to find information on federal employment for veterans, transitioning military servicemembers and spouses. It includes details on the federal hiring process, veterans preference, and special veterans programs with numerous federal agencies (such as VA, and the departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Labor). In addition, you'll find information on the Military Spouse Preference Program and Military Spouse Network. Note that although this site was developed for veterans, some of the positions are open to nonveterans.

- **USAJobs.gov** This is the U.S. government's official website for listing civil service opportunities with federal agencies, operated by the Office of Personnel Management. As of Oct. 1, job opportunities for veterans varied widely – from security professionals to accountants to environmental protection specialists, and hundreds more.

In August, the U.S. unemployment rate was 3.6 percent nationwide. But for veterans, the unemployment rate for that same period was only 3.4 percent, making August the 12th consecutive month the veteran unemployment rate was lower than the nonveteran one. These statistics are nationwide averages and can vary significantly from state to state, so be sure to do your research.

Wendy Enelow is co-author of "Modernize Your Résumé: Get Noticed ... Get Hired" and "Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions."



CENTENNIAL

Post 64, Middleboro, Mass.

At this year's Middleboro Memorial Day observance, Simeon L. Nickerson Post 64 sponsored the appearance of two 45-by-90-foot U.S. flags: one from Mount Rushmore, the other a World War II-era 48-star flag that has been displayed at several battle sites. The flag event was part of Post 64's celebration of its 100th anniversary, and the town's 350th anniversary.

SHARE YOUR POST'S LEGACY

Upload stories, photos and videos of your American Legion post's history.

legion.org/centennial

EDUCATION

Student loans and VA disability ratings



Q: I was attending college using my Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Unfortunately, during that time I decided to apply for student loans to help with my bills. After doctor appointments and applying for disability, I was approved for 100 percent VA disability and compensation. I heard I may be able

to have my student loans forgiven since I received my disability rating. If so, how do I apply?

A: If you are totally and permanently disabled, you may qualify for loan forgiveness. You will need to complete a discharge application along with all required documentation. VA will provide a letter showing that you have a service-connected disability that is 100 percent disabling or are totally disabled based on an employment rating.

Once you have completed the application and documentation, you can contact Nelnet, the total and permanent discharge (TPD) servicer, at disabilityinformation@nelnet.net.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz.

askvalerie@legion.org

What Adult Diaper Companies Don't Want Men To Know...

One Men's Liberty keeps you dry and leak free for up to 24 hours.

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Urinary incontinence affects more than 5 million men in the United States of all ages. Diapers trap moisture, causing UTIs, discomfort and odors.

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— John in Michigan

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Millions of men spend thousands of dollars each year on diapers, which are not covered by Medicare. Diapers and pads can cost as much as \$300 out of pocket each month. Men's Liberty is covered by Medicare, VA/Tricare and over 3,000 insurance plans. Standard deductibles and co-pays apply.

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EDUCATION

Advance 500 scholarship benefits Legion families

DeVry University is proud to be a higher education school that is veteran friendly, where students have access to online learning options, a range of tech-infused undergraduate and graduate programs, military and veteran student organizations, career professionals and more. DeVry's commitment to the military, veteran and public safety service communities has helped identify and address a need for providing assistance to an underserved population: their dependents.

As a way to invest in the entire family, DeVry created the Advance 500 scholarship. This scholarship allows members of partnering military, veteran or public safety service organizations to attend DeVry and bring along a dependent* at zero additional tuition cost** for the family member. Members of the American Legion Family – The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary – have an opportunity to apply for this scholarship thanks to the relationship between The American Legion and DeVry. This opportunity also is open to other service organizations whose members provide vital assistance to their communities, such as first responders.

"At DeVry University, we are trying to create a sense of family and belonging," said Greg Pace, national director of military and veterans affairs at DeVry. "As we continue to thank veterans (and public safety organizations) for their service, we should be thanking the spouses and the dependents for their service as well. So the Advance 500 scholarship is an opportunity to give back to the community and help families along the way."

The American Legion Magazine spoke with Pace about the Advance 500 scholarship and how it can benefit members of the American Legion Family.

What led DeVry to create the Advance 500?

Even though the veteran unemployment rate has been getting better, I knew that unemployment for veterans and military spouses was very high. When servicemembers get out of the service they are awarded military benefits, but their dependents don't have any educational benefits for the time they also served. Many of these families cannot afford to go to school, and they don't have a lot of resources once they get out of the military. Putting all that together, I thought, why don't we allow veterans and members of other vital service organizations to bring their dependents to school with them for zero additional tuition cost? That inspired the launch of Advance 500.

How does this scholarship benefit American Legion Family members?

The Advance 500 scholarship allows a member of the American Legion Family to pursue their education at DeVry and bring a dependent along at zero tuition cost for that family member. It's first-come, first-served in terms of those who apply and qualify; up to 500 scholarships will be offered. American Legion Family members who are interested in applying must enroll as a new or readmitted student by the end of January 2020.

Why is the relationship between The American Legion and DeVry important to the veteran community?

As a Legionnaire, I understand that The American Legion is the largest wartime veterans service organization in the United States, and its mission includes sponsoring wholesome programs in our communities. I believe Advance 500 is one such program that will provide a much-needed benefit to our communities. My aim with Advance 500 is to assist as many veteran and first responder families as possible, empowering them to improve their lives via education.

The scale of DeVry is also national in reach. Our two organizations working together have the opportunity to serve many families seeking higher education across the United States. Moreover, I envision that the Advance 500 scholarship program, utilized as a member benefit, might also play a role in assisting The American Legion itself with growing active memberships. I see this as an opportunity to not only help veteran families directly, but also indirectly by fueling the growth of an invaluable organization committed to the advocacy of this community.

Learn more online about the Advance 500 scholarship and DeVry University:

 partner.devry.edu/tal

* Dependents who may benefit from family tuition savings include spouse, biological child, stepchild, legally adopted child, child for whom the employee is a court-appointed guardian, child of a domestic partner, and adoptive or biological parents of the eligible employee. Dependents are also defined as a domestic partner in a committed long-term relationship. Neither party can be legally married to other individuals.

** Scholarship equal to tuition charges per session as long as sponsor and recipient are meeting continuing eligibility criteria, not including books and fees.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

New offer, still no sale

President Trump raised eyebrows – and tempers – when he proposed purchasing Greenland from Denmark. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen angrily rejected the proposal out of hand. But as NPR reports, not long ago, another president made the same proposal.

In 1946, with President Harry Truman's blessing, the United States offered Copenhagen "\$100 million in gold and the rights to a patch of Alaskan oil" in exchange for Greenland, which Washington viewed as a strategic territory that would allow the United States to defend against Soviet strategic bombers that might fly over the Arctic Circle toward North American targets.

"Then – as now – the idea shocked the Danes," NPR adds, citing AP reporting on the story and documents in the National Archives. And then, as now, the United States and Denmark were allies. By 1949, the two were founding members of NATO. In the decades that followed, Denmark allowed America to use Greenland for alliance defense. The United States still maintains important bases in Thule.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Bovine IEDs

In a sign of their desperation or depravity – or both – Islamic State insurgents are strapping explosives onto cows and donkeys to target Iraqi forces, the *Washington Examiner* reports: "Two cows, strapped with explosive belts, detonated in a village in eastern Iraq ... injuring one civilian. Militants set the cattle in the direction of a military checkpoint in Diyala province, but Iraqi soldiers opened fire and 'blew them up' before they could reach their target, according to a Kurdish news organization." At least 14 people have been killed by explosive-laden donkeys since 2010.

Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health



by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, AloeCure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe the joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in AloeCure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharmaceutical therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"I was always in 'indigestion hell.' Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try AloeCure. And something remarkable happened... Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone – completely gone – but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from 100% organic Aloe Vera, AloeCure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her colleagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach

and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion... soothe aching joints... reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails... manage cholesterol and oxidative stress... and improve sleep and brain function... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One AloeCure Capsule Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
- Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
- Supports Healthy Immune System
- Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

Due to the enormous interest consumers have shown in AloeCure, the company has decided to extend their nationwide savings event for a little while longer. Here's how it works...

Call the AloeCure number and speak to a live person in the US. Callers will be greeted by a knowledgeable and friendly person approved to offer up to 3 FREE bottles of AloeCure with your order. AloeCure's Toll-Free number is 1-800-593-8218. Only a limited discounted supply of AloeCure is currently available.

Consumers who miss out on the current product inventory will have to wait until more becomes available and that could take weeks. They will also not be guaranteed any additional savings. The company advises not to wait. Call 1-800-593-8218 today.

THESE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. THIS PRODUCT IS NOT INTENDED TO DIAGNOSE, TREAT, CURE, OR PREVENT ANY DISEASE. ALL DOCTORS MENTIONED ARE REMUNERATED FOR THEIR SERVICES. ALL CLINICAL STUDIES ON ALOECURE'S ACTIVE INGREDIENT WERE INDEPENDENTLY CONDUCTED AND WERE NOT SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN GLOBAL HEALTH GROUP.

PERSONAL FINANCE



Take it down a notch

FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

It's hard to not get caught up in the excitement of the holidays – often to your financial detriment. And the challenge of staying within your financial guardrails doesn't go away when the kids are out of the house. Oh, those grandkids!

In the spirit of enjoying the holidays without too much financial damage, test out these five tactics that can help

keep you on track. These ideas may allow you to, as my wife is fond of telling me, “take it down a notch.”

- **Create a gift list.** Since the kids have flown the coop, we've done a much better job of responsible grocery shopping. We plan out our meals for the coming days, make a shopping list and faithfully – most of the time – execute the list. It's amazing how much less you spend when you swoop in and buy solely what you planned on. Apply this same list-making technique to your holiday shopping.

- **Consider financial gifts.** These are gifts with staying power, such as a 529 College Savings Plan or savings account. They cost more than a toy – that could be broken by the end of the day – but offer the potential for long-term benefit. They also offer a definitive “spend” that can keep you from falling prey to momentum shopping.

- **Create an accountability partnership.** My wife and I do a good job of balancing each other out in a lot of areas.

Whether we are trying to eat right, exercise or moderate spending, two minds seem to be better than one. Typically, at least one of us will have the willpower to make the right decision at the right time. Map out how much you plan on spending for gifts, parties, food, etc., and then work together to make sure you don't stray.

- **Set reasonable limits.** The last thing the holidays should do is put your family in a financial bind, so avoid exorbitant emotional purchases. Before you get caught up in the spirit of the season and begin to shop or plan your get-togethers and trips, establish a firm cap on what is to be spent. Make it stick. (Sorry, car dealers, the fancy new car with a big red bow is out of bounds this year.)

- **Sign a gift treaty.** Not nearly as complex as a trade treaty, a gift treaty clearly delineates who is buying gifts for whom and in what price range. This can be especially handy with your extended family. If you've ever felt dread at figuring out what to buy your 16 nieces and nephews, you know where I'm coming from. Instead, draw names and come to an agreement. That's the treaty part.

Happy holidays, and best of luck as you take it down a notch.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

legion.org/usaa/focusonfinances



ACTIVE DUTY

Space Force blueprints

Air Force planning documents indicate that the Pentagon could stand up the U.S. Space Force “within 90 days of the new branch's formal establishment by law,” *Defense News* reports. The majority of the new branch's enabling and implementation staff – 151 people – will come from the Air Force. However, *Defense News* adds that the other branches will transfer personnel into the Space Force, including 24 from the Army, 14 from the Navy and Marine Corps, and nine from the Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the intelligence community.

Air Force Secretary Matt Donovan says, “These 200 people will then be given the task of ‘Now you go flesh it out. Put the meat on the bones of how we're going to design a Space Force, with not only the staff but the entire organization.’ How are we going to be organized to provide the best support to the warfighter?”

The Pentagon projects that 15,000 personnel will migrate from the Air Force to the Space Force in its first five years. Army and Navy personnel will also be reassigned, and about half of Air Force Space Command's 25,000 active-duty and civilian personnel will migrate to the Space Force, according to *Defense News*.

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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

8th Tact Ftr Wing "Wolfpack" (Ubon RTAFB, 1965-1974), San Antonio, 5/19-21, George Hoffman, (740) 992-0367, keepthefaiht1120@suddenlink.net; **AeroMed Evac Assn**, San Antonio, 3/25-28, David Schill, (317) 898-4293, information@amea.us; **AF Public Affairs Alumni Assn**, Wright-Patterson AFB/Fairborn, OH, 4/30-5/2, John Terino, (703) 239-2704, johnterino@afpaaa.org; **Pforzheim Air Stn Vets Assn**, Columbus, GA, 10/8-12, Doyle Hardy, (817) 366-0166, k5hte1@gmail.com; **USAFSS/ESC**, St. Augustine, FL, 1/23-26, Jay Johnson, (321) 537-7871, jay.johnson1943@gmail.com

ARMY

2nd Bn 1st FA 1st Armd Div (Desert Storm), Lawton, AZ, 10/25-28, Peter Neally, (505) 259-9756, pneallysr@yahoo.com; **2nd Gen Hosp, Ward 1AB (Landstuhl, Germany, 1974-1977)**, San Antonio, 4/17-19, Bill Pierce, (435) 896-3382, bpiercerud@gmail.com; **9th Inf Big Red One MACV**, Rapid City, SD, 10/13-13, Jack LaRocca, (408) 334-8633, companion@earthlink.net; **14th Trans Bn (AM&S)(GS) (Nha Trang & Tuy Hoa/Phu Hiep, Vietnam, 1965-1972)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Dan Quackenbush, (315) 436-0498, quack0711@twcny.rr.com; **79th Trans Co (DS) (Qui Nhon & Tuy Hoa, Vietnam, 1965-1972)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Art Harrison, (440) 668-0019, jam1996min@aol.com; **88th Trans Co (An Khe, Vietnam)**, La Porte, IN, 4/17-19, Butch Weston, (219) 363-5374, rhonea_weston@yahoo.com; **191st AHC**, Green Valley, AZ, 9/10-13, Paul Vitale, (520) 999-1825, uh1dslick@gmail.com; **335th Trans Co (DS) (Chu Lai & Dong Ba Thin, Vietnam, 1965-1971)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Tom Peterson, (316) 650-8822, gthmispeterson@gmail.com; **339th Trans Co (DS) (Nha Trang & Tuy Hoa/Phu Hiep, Vietnam, 1962-1968)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Ralph Frank, (352) 527-9319, rf339ds@gmail.com; **471st Trans Co (Desert Storm)**, Washington, DC, 7/15-18, 2021, Brian Simms, (580) 713-9864, brian151@hotmail.com; **540th Trans Co (GS) (Qui Nhon, Vietnam, 1965-1971)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Wayne Gallant, (916) 543-4856, wayne.gallant@sbcglobal.net; **604th Trans Co (DS) (Pleiku, Vietnam, 1966-1973)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Ken Gurbisz, (908) 489-0806, gurbisz@verizon.net; **608th Trans Co (DS) (Dong Ba Thin, Vietnam, 1967-1972)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Tim McElhinney, (390) 977-9800, tmcelhinney5197@hotmail.com; **610th Trans Co (GS) (An Khe & Da Nang, Vietnam, 1966-1972)**, Tucson, AZ, 10/25-29, Carl Woods, (620) 842-2180, carlewoods1948@yahoo.com; **MACV Advisory Team 58/73, Chuong Thien Province, Vietnam**, Springfield, IL, 7/23-26, John Raschke, (217) 553-4498, foxwilson01@gmail.com; **OCS (Fort Knox, KY, 1965-1968)**, Columbus, GA, 5/2-4, Rich Sebastian, (330) 388-6002, richandmary@zoominternet.net

MARINES

1st Mar Div Assn 79th Anniv Commemoration, Camp Pendleton, CA, 1/27-31, June Cormier, (760) 763-3268, june.oldbreed@fmda.us; **Mar Air Traffic Cntl Assn (MATCA)**, San Antonio, 9/23-27, Steve Harris, (509) 499-8137, sandkh2@gmail.com

NAVY

Deep Submergence Assn, San Diego, 9/25-27, Terry Owen, (505) 301-4349, teowen@comcast.net; **Detroit AOE 4**, Atlantic City, NJ, 4/24-26, Bill Weidner, (610) 599-8936, ussdetroit@ptd.net; **Douglas H. Fox DD 779**, Norfolk, VA, 6/11-14, Joe Sczyrek, (201) 563-1264, dd779association@verizon.net; **Iowa BB 61**, Orlando, FL, 9/8-13, Bradley Cole, (469) 432-7641, stinger75154@sbcglobal.net; **Kearsarge CVS 33**, Milwaukee, 5/25-29, Bill Hollywood, (907) 225-6556, aknos@outlook.com; **Macon CA 132**, Jacksonville, FL, 5/4-8, Bud Johnson, (603) 888-1418, nce223ne@comcast.net; **Maddox DD 622/731**, Harrisburg, PA, 9/17-20, Dennis Stokhaug, (414) 339-6168, maddox64@aol.com; **Mauna Kea AE 22**, Milwaukee, 4/30-5/3, Dennis Thieme, (262) 758-3984, dtctthieme@outlook.com; **MCB 40 Seabees (Rhode Island)**, Ventura/Port Hueneme, CA, 3/26-29, Kevin Carpenter, (516) 732-1401, K. Carpenter, collectorkc@aol.com; **Navy Postal Clerks Assn**, Portland, OR, 4/26-30, Alan Hass, (717) 226-1995, hassommon1@aol.com; **NSA Da Nang, Vietnam**, Clarksville, IN, 3/30-4/4, Bernie Uhrinek, (724) 353-9627; **Regulus AF 57**, Hagerstown, MD, 5/12-15, Ric Neiman, (804) 337-2626, ricneim@aol.com; **Shreveport LPD 12**, 50th Anniv of Commissioning, Charleston, SC, 4/26-30, Harry Collis, (262) 982-6013, hcollis@twc.com; **T-Boats - Mackerel SST 1, Marlin SST 2, Barracuda SST 3**, Little Rock, AR, 9/30-10/3, John Delihanty, (503) 974-9305, loisbill@comcast.net; **Taylor DD/DDE 468**, Hershey/Harrisburg, PA, 8/27-31, James O'Neill, (804) 212-8911, oneillfalm@aol.com; **Wallace L. Lind DD 703**, Savannah, GA, 5/3-7, Ed Bauscher, (502) 876-2137, eb62vette@aol.com

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Post 337, GA: Harold Cheatham, Ronald Fairburn, Albert Lheueux, Robert Washington, George Weiss, Robert Widener

IN SEARCH OF

2nd Bn 125th Bde 1st Cav Motor Pool (Fort Hood, TX, 1981), Tom Eads, (812) 219-8235
2nd Mar Div FME, Camp Lejeune Serv Bn Spec No 3026 (1951-1954), Al Heidler, (954) 540-5942, mh5942@hotmail.com
3rd Inf Div HHQ, HHQ Btry 2/39 FA Survey Crew (Schweinfurt, Germany, 1972-1975), Bob Varone, (941) 473-1628, bobvarone@hotmail.com

17th Sig Bn Wire Co (Pirmasens-Karlsruhe, Germany, 1955-1956), Leo Carlock, (217) 323-2367, budcarlock@casscomm.com
64th Trans (Pleiku, 1967-1968), Jimmy Tidwell, (931) 231-597, jvickitidwell@aol.com
198th LIB 1/6 Inf B Co (Chu Lai, Vietnam, 1968), Jerry Haussels, (573) 364-8273
HQ Btry 10th Mar 2nd Mar Div (Camp Lejeune, NC, Comm Ctr Operators, Jan 1989-Dec 1990), Dale Daughenbaugh, (515) 619-4057, daugd01@yahoo.com
I Co 3rd Bn 16th Inf 1st Div (Roosevelt Bks, Berlin, 1949-1950), Melvin "Mickey" Hanson, (706) 687-0253
Navy Vets on Iwo Jima (Feb 1945-Apr 1946), J.D. Morris, (512) 273-2230, simmonsbm2004@yahoo.com
NMCB 62, Norm Hahn, (715) 379-8482, normhahnjr@yahoo.com
VP-1 Flt Crews 2 & 4 (Vietnam, 1966-1967), Jim Arnold, (423) 652-2717, seabee24@charter.net

TAPS

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Stephen D. Gray, Dept. of Arkansas. Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmte. Memb. 2015-2018.
Edward J. McGivern, Dept. of Iowa. Dept. Cmdr. 1991-1992 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1986-1987.
Wayne Stacey, Dept. of Alabama. Dept. Cmdr. 2014-2015, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2010-2013 and Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Memb. 2013-2019.
Robert F. Thomas, Dept. of Wisconsin. Dept. Cmdr. 2000-2001.
Clayton E. Thompson, Dept. of Mississippi. Dept. Cmdr. 1987-1988, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1988-1989 and Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1986-1987.

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1. Paid/Requested	1,788,977	1,769,395
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1. Outside-county as stated on Form 3541	4,775	4,775
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3. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
e. Free distribution outside the mail	0	0
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g. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f)	1,797,960	1,778,396
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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.
Jeffrey Stoffer, Publisher

Judging by my kids' Christmas lists, they think this parenting gig pays pretty well.

WHAT SONG do you sing at a snowman's birthday party? "Freeze a Jolly Good Fellow."

AS A KID, I asked my father, "What will Santa get me this Christmas?"

He replied, "Don't think about getting. Think about giving!"

So I said, "OK, what will Santa Claus give me this Christmas?"

WHY DO PEOPLE build snowmen and not snowwomen? Because only men would stand out in the snow without a coat.

ISN'T IT EMBARRASSING how Santa ends up having the same wrapping paper as your parents?

WHAT'S THE BEST Christmas gift in the world? A broken drum. Can't beat it!

A RANCHER was persuaded to cross-breed his cattle with hyenas. It was a disaster – the offspring were the laughingstock of the community.

A CHEMISTRY TEACHER is recruited as a radio operator during World War II. He soon becomes familiar with the military habit of abbreviating everything. When his unit comes under attack, he is ordered to inform headquarters.

"NaCl over NaOH! NaCl over NaOH!" he yells.

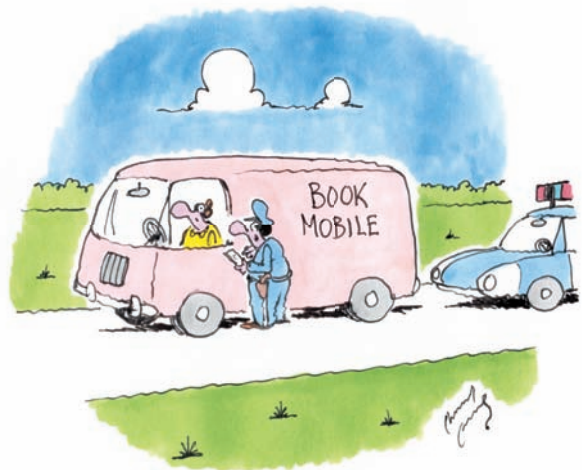
"NaCl over NaOH?" comes the confused reply.

"What do you mean?"

"The base is under a salt!"



"Of course my assets are frozen. What did you expect?"



"Ask not for whom the siren wails. It wails for thee."

AN AIRLINE PILOT hit the runway rather hard. Embarrassed, he had difficulty looking passengers in the eye, and they were too shocked to say anything. Finally, everyone had exited the aircraft except for an old lady walking with a cane.

"Young man, may I ask a question?" she said.

"Yes, ma'am," the pilot replied.

"Did we land or were we shot down?"

TRUE BEAUTY can be a curse. Fortunately, I'm only a mild invective.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE between a zebra corporal and a zebra sergeant? The zebra sergeant has more stripes.

"CONGRESS may be going home for the holidays soon. How can you beat a Christmas gift like that?" – *Bob Hope*

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